



General Assembly

January Session, 2023

Raised Bill No. 6703

LCO No. 4234



Referred to Committee on HUMAN SERVICES

Introduced by:
(HS)

AN ACT CONCERNING THE LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 16a-41a of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

3 (a) The Commissioner of Social Services shall submit to the joint
4 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of
5 matters relating to energy [planning and activities] and technology,
6 appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, and human services
7 the following on the implementation of the block grant program
8 authorized under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981,
9 as amended:

10 (1) Not later than August first, annually, a Connecticut energy
11 assistance program annual plan which establishes guidelines for the use
12 of funds authorized under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance
13 Act of 1981, as amended, and includes the following:

14 (A) Criteria for determining which households are to receive

15 emergency assistance;

16 (B) A description of systems used to ensure referrals to other energy
17 assistance programs and the taking of simultaneous applications, as
18 required under section 16a-41;

19 (C) A description of outreach efforts;

20 (D) Estimates of the total number of households eligible for assistance
21 under the program and the number of households in which one or more
22 elderly or physically disabled individuals eligible for assistance reside;

23 (E) Design of a basic grant for eligible households that does not
24 discriminate against such households based on the type of energy used
25 for heating; and

26 (F) A payment plan for fuel deliveries beginning November 1, [2018]
27 2023, that ensures a vendor of deliverable fuel who completes deliveries
28 authorized by a community action agency that contracts with the
29 commissioner to administer a fuel assistance program is paid by the
30 community action agency electronically not later than [thirty business
31 days] forty-eight hours after the date the community action agency
32 receives an authorized fuel slip or invoice for payment from the vendor;

33 (2) Not later than January thirtieth, annually, a report covering the
34 preceding months of the program year, including:

35 (A) In each community action agency geographic area, the number of
36 fuel assistance applications filed, approved and denied, and the number
37 of emergency assistance requests made, approved and denied;

38 (B) In each such area, the total amount of fuel and emergency
39 assistance, itemized by such type of assistance, and total expenditures
40 to date;

41 (C) For each state-wide office of each state agency administering the
42 program and each community action agency, administrative expenses
43 under the program, by line item, and an estimate of outreach

44 expenditures; and

45 (D) A list of community action agencies that failed to make timely
46 payments to vendors of deliverable fuel in the Connecticut energy
47 assistance program and the steps taken by the commissioner to ensure
48 future timely payments by such agencies; and

49 (3) Not later than November first, annually, a report covering the
50 preceding twelve calendar months, including:

51 (A) In each community action agency geographic area, (i) seasonal
52 totals for the categories of data submitted under subdivision (1) of this
53 subsection, (ii) the number of households receiving fuel assistance in
54 which elderly or physically disabled individuals reside, and (iii) the
55 average combined benefit level of fuel, emergency and renter assistance;

56 (B) The number of homeowners and tenants whose heat or total
57 energy costs are not included in their rent receiving fuel and emergency
58 assistance under the program by benefit level;

59 (C) The number of homeowners and tenants whose heat is included
60 in their rent and who are receiving assistance, by benefit level; and

61 (D) The number of households receiving assistance, by energy type
62 and total expenditures for each energy type.

63 (b) The Commissioner of Social Services shall implement a program
64 to purchase deliverable fuel for low-income households participating in
65 the Connecticut energy assistance program and the state-appropriated
66 fuel assistance program. The commissioner shall ensure an adequate
67 supply of vendors for the program by (1) establishing county and
68 regional pricing standards for deliverable fuel, and (2) reimbursing fuel
69 providers based on the price of the fuel on the date of delivery.

70 (c) The commissioner shall ensure that no fuel vendor discriminates
71 against fuel assistance program recipients who are under the vendor's
72 standard payment, delivery, service or other similar plans. The
73 commissioner may take advantage of programs offered by fuel vendors

74 that reduce the cost of the fuel purchased, including, but not limited to,
75 fixed price, capped price, prepurchase or summer-fill programs that
76 reduce program cost and that make the maximum use of program
77 revenues. As funding allows, the commissioner shall ensure that all
78 agencies administering the fuel assistance program shall make
79 payments to program fuel vendors in advance of the delivery of energy
80 where vendor provided price-management strategies require payments
81 in advance.

82 [(c)] (d) Each community action agency administering a fuel
83 assistance program shall submit reports, as requested by the
84 Commissioner of Social Services, concerning pricing information from
85 vendors of deliverable fuel participating in the program. Such
86 information shall include, but not be limited to, the state-wide or
87 regional retail price per unit of deliverable fuel, the reduced price per
88 unit paid by the state for the deliverable fuel in utilizing price
89 management strategies offered by program vendors for all consumers,
90 the number of units delivered to the state under the program and the
91 total savings under the program due to the purchase of deliverable fuel
92 utilizing price-management strategies offered by program vendors for
93 all consumers.

94 [(d)] (e) Within available federal and state funding, the
95 Commissioner of Social Services shall provide an annual cost-of-living
96 adjustment in benefits to households participating in the program equal
97 to the most recent percentage increase in the consumer price index for
98 urban consumers. If funding allows, the [Commissioner of Social
99 Services] commissioner, in consultation with the Secretary of the Office
100 of Policy and Management, shall require that, each community action
101 agency administering a fuel assistance program begin accepting
102 applications for the program not later than September first of each year.

103 [(e) Not later than November 1, 2018, the Commissioner of Social
104 Services shall require each community action agency administering a
105 fuel assistance program to make payment to a vendor of deliverable fuel
106 not later than thirty days after the community action agency receives an

107 authorized fuel slip or invoice for payment from the vendor.]

108 (f) The Commissioner of Social Services shall submit each plan or
109 report described in subsection (a) of this section to the Low-Income
110 Energy Advisory Board, established pursuant to section 16a-41b, not
111 later than seven days prior to submitting such plan or report to the joint
112 standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
113 matters relating to energy and technology, appropriations and human
114 services.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	July 1, 2023	16a-41a

Statement of Purpose:

To make changes in program payment practices and benefits to ensure an adequate pool of fuel vendors and assistance meets the needs of low-income households.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]